

Remember Who Rules

Jeremiah Dennis

Daniel 4:1-37

June 2, 2024

The Bible is very clear about one essential truth. There is no God but the one true God, and the one true God reigns supreme and the one true God tolerates no competition. Although competition is exactly what the world of men intend. In some sense, history is the unbroken story of man's feeble attempt to overthrow God, to be God, to breach the gates of heaven, to storm its hallowed halls, and to occupy the Creator's throne. But mark this, the King of heaven will not be removed. He will not relinquish His throne. No, the King of heaven, alone, rules. He rules heaven, and He rules Earth, and He rules absolutely, supremely, sovereignly, and totally and all power and all authority and all rulers will answer to God Most High. This grand reality is what we have before us in Daniel 4.

In a Babylon world, where God is diminished and man is exalted, where pride is a virtue and humility is the vice, where the truth is marginalized, where believers are ostracized and pushed to the fringes of society, we desperately need to remember that our God reigns. Because when the clamor of Babylon becomes deafening, it's easy to forget that God is on His throne. It's easy to become discouraged and disheartened and yet Daniel 4 would say to you, don't let that happen.

So, here's how we're going to approach our time together in Daniel 4. Two parts. Your notes has that, two parts: part one, the story explained; part two, the story ingrained. Part one, we're going to walk through the chapter. I'm going to tell you what it means and part two, I'm going to extract the dominating principle from Daniel 4, and I'm going to endeavor to bury it so deeply in your hearts, you will never forget what Daniel 4 is all about and that's going to be good for your heart, because you live in Babylon, and Babylon seeks to make you forget about God. Daniel 4 says, don't do that. Actually, if you're going to walk wisely and well in Babylon, you need to remember, every day, that God still rules the world.

So, that's what we have for ourselves in the next hour. We begin with part one, The Story Explained. Part one, The Story Explained, I want you to look down at verse one and don't worry, I'm not going to preach for an hour. Pastor John's right here, I'd get fired. All right. Verse 1. "King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you." Here's the personal testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the most important man on the planet. He is writing what you would call an open letter to all of his subjects scattered throughout all his vast domain, and he's giving them a personal message.

The message starts in verse 2. "It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation."

Before we even take one more step in the text, I want to pause and think about how outrageous that declaration would be today. Could you imagine if you turned on your TV, and you saw a world ruler calling a global news conference and saying, "Hey, I want you to know I worship the God of heaven"? You'll never see that and yet that is precisely what Nebuchadnezzar is doing to his kingdom of tens of millions of people. You may be wondering, how in the world did a pagan come to this position? He tells you, starting in verse 4. He takes a step back, kind of a flashback, and he's going to say, "This is how I came to my newfound understanding of the God who really rules."

Verse 4, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace." Think about that word, "prospering", for a moment. They would use that to describe plants. It means very green, to be green, and it spoke of plants that were vibrant, and verdant, and thriving. So, Nebuchadnezzar is essentially saying, "My kingdom is secure. I'm on the throne. We're in a time of peace and prosperity. This is the pinnacle of my power. In other words, it's a good day to be me." That is, until the next verse, verse 5.

By the way, historical footnote, based on verse 4, many scholars would say this is probably 20 to 30 years after the events of chapter 3. The fiery furnace was probably 20 to 30 years ago. So, Nebuchadnezzar is now anywhere from the 30th to the 35th year of his reign. He's been Daniel's friend for 25 to 30 years and then he has another dream.

Verse 5, "I saw a dream that made me afraid." That word, "afraid", speaks of terrifying fear. "As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me." And the sense of fear is even heightened because the word "alarmed" means terrified, troubled, frightened. So, what you have here is a powerful man, in a powerfully afraid state. Then you'd say, "Yeah, but I remember the first dream, and I remember that Daniel sorted it out for him. So, he's going to go to Daniel, right?" Wrong.

Verse 6. What he does is he goes back to his old companions of folly, "the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, the astrologers". Actually, the very same group of "wise", quote-unquote, advisors who couldn't interpret his first dream and yet for some reason, he goes back to the band of fools and says, "Help me understand this." You're not surprised when you read verse 7 and they can't help him. They don't know what the interpretation of the dream is. Of course they can't. It's the blind leading the blind and what happens? They both fall into a ditch.

But hope appears in verse 8, because Daniel appears in verse 8. Was Daniel away on some sort of diplomatic mission? We don't know. Did King Nebuchadnezzar just resist going to Daniel, because he was resisting the God of Daniel? That's what John Calvin thinks is likely. But when he exhausts all other hope, he does finally call Daniel, and he says, "I'm going to relate to you the dream, and I want to know its interpretation." In verse 8, before he gets to the interpretation, before he relates the dream, I want you to notice how he refers to Daniel.

"He who was named Belteshazzar", right? Remember, that's the Babylonian name for Daniel. "He who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god". I highlight that because what that

tells you is, at this point in the narrative, he's still a pagan. At this point in the narrative, King Nebuchadnezzar still worships Bel, Bel Marduk, full name of the God of Babylon. So, he's not a worshiper of the one true God, but he knows that Daniel's a worshiper of the one true God and Daniel has superior, superlative wisdom. So he says, "I'm going to go to Daniel, who has a spirit of the holy God. He's got supernatural insight. My guys failed me. Okay, finally I'll ask Daniel."

So, here we have verse 10. He begins to relate the dream. This is first-person testimony, by the way. That's why it's "I", because this is Nebuchadnezzar speaking. "The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth." So, what you have here is this massive, expansive, significant tree planted in the middle of the earth, and it's just dominating the landscape.

Then verse 12, the description continues. "Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all." That's a tree you wish you could grow, but you live in Arizona and we don't have grass. Let's all move to Babylon. So, "The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it." See, what you have is not only a tree dominating the landscape, you have a tree that's life-giving and life-sustaining.

In verse 13, this is why Nebuchadnezzar was alarmed and afraid, because the dream turns dark and the dream turns foreboding. Verse 13, "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one came down from heaven. He proclaimed aloud and said thus, 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.'" What you have here is a magnificent tree, magnificently devastated.

But maybe there's a glimmer of hope in verse 15, because look at what verse 15 says. "'But leave the stump of its roots in the earth.'" Stump of its roots, that's where the life of the tree is, the roots. So, the life is still there, even though the tree has been devastated. Leave it there "'bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.'" I wonder if you noticed that subtle shift in verse 15. The tree is a man. The tree is a man. "Let him be wet with the dew of heaven." This is a very curious dream, because the massive tree is actually a man and verse 16 elaborates, "'Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him.'" Nebuchadnezzar does not know what that means, but he knows it's not good.

Then verse 17 had to further confuse him. "'The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones'". Why? What's the purpose of this declaration? It tells you, "'to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'" By this point, Nebuchadnezzar is absolutely confounded and confused, and he's got all kinds of questions in his mind. He's saying, "Who are the watchers? Who is the tree? Who is the Most High? What on earth does the devastation of the tree mean? Do I feature in this?" There's a reason he was alarmed and afraid;

because at this moment right now, his heart is thumping, his blood is pumping, his pulse is jumping. Nebuchadnezzar is looking at Daniel and he's saying, "I need answers, I need them fast. Can you provide me the interpretation?"

Daniel doesn't respond as you might expect. Verse 19, "Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while." Dismayed means that he was appalled, he was astounded. "His thoughts alarmed him." That's the same word, alarmed, that was used of Nebuchadnezzar. So, whatever it is about this dream, it has alarmed both the most powerful man in the world and the godliest man on the planet. Both of them are alarmed by it. In fact, Daniel is, for some period of time, struck speechless and if you read, commentators say, "Ah, you know what? Maybe he's speechless because Nebuchadnezzar is a potentially violent man, he's got immense power. You give him bad news, you just might lose your head and sometimes, your head is important for continued life."

So, maybe Daniel's just afraid, right? This is self-preservation. No, it's not. Daniel, in this moment, Daniel has compassion for the king. Daniel loves this pagan ruler. Is Nebuchadnezzar wicked? Absolutely. Did you know what he did to Zedekiah when he took over Jerusalem? Zedekiah was the king. Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah brought to where he was, he had his sons brought to where he was, and then, in front of Zedekiah, he had his sons slaughtered and then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah so he was blind, and the last vision he ever had was bloody, lifeless, dead children. His children. That's Nebuchadnezzar. That's Daniel's boss. He's not a good man.

But Daniel has compassion for this not good man, because Daniel is a good man, and he wants him to worship the one true God, even if, that day, he didn't worship the one true God. So Daniel is silent in compassion. But in compassion, then he opens his mouth. Verse 22, and here's where he's going to drive right at the heart of the interpretation and he basically says, "Listen, you're the tree. Nebuchadnezzar, you are the tree. You're the greatest king of the greatest kingdom, and your kingdom, your empire, has provided order and stability and provision and protection for untold millions of people and yet your power has gone to your head. Your power, your pride has corrupted your mind and your thinking, blinded your eyes and now heaven is on alert, because your pride has aroused God's wrath. Nebuchadnezzar, judgment is coming."

Look at verse 25. Here, he explains what judgment looks like: "driven among men. You'll dwell with the beast of the field. You'll eat grass like an ox." I guess he's going to become a vegan. Just kidding. "You're going to eat grass like an ox, you'll be wet with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass over you." By the way, that "seven periods of time" probably means seven years, because in Daniel 7:25, he uses the word "times", and it very clearly refers to years. So, it's most probable that he's saying seven years of this existence. Until you recognize what? Until what? Until "you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will." He's going to live for seven years in that condition.

Then you have to admire Daniel. Look at verse 27. This is where Daniel shines. And this is where the character of a godly man shines. Because even though he just delivered terrible news to the king, he's actually going to go even further and, in humility, in respect, in compassion, he's going to call the king to repentance. "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you. Break off your sins," which is to say repent. "Break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed". Did you know, Nebuchadnezzar was an amazing building... Or builder, rather? He was an amazing builder and so it's very likely that he had his builders under extreme working conditions, and to pay for this massive campaign of building, taxes were high. So yes, he was oppressing the people and Daniel says, "Show mercy to the oppressed."

Here's why Daniel says what he says. "That there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity". In other words, king, if you will repent, God will avert judgment, you won't have to live out the awful ramifications of this dream, but you must repent and you as the reader are hopeful that he'll actually repent. You're hopeful that Nebuchadnezzar will hear this and he'll say, "I don't want this to happen. You're right, I've been proud. I'm going to submit to this greater king." But that's not at all what happened.

Verse 28. Because sometimes, wise words fall on deaf ears and if you've ever evangelized and the other person walked off, hard-hearted, you know exactly what Daniel knows. "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of 12 months," did you know God gave him 12 months to repent? 12 months to respond? And he did not. So, what you'll have is 12 months later, Nebuchadnezzar is on the top of his palace. The roofs were flat, so he's looking out at his city, surveying his city, and he is just glorying in the majesty of his city and so he utters this tremendous boast. Verse 30. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" Maybe you know that proud people love personal pronouns. They like to talk about "me" and "my" and "I" and Nebuchadnezzar leads the pack here. I, and my, and my.

By the way, the first I is emphatic. So, what he's saying is, "Is not this great Babylon, which I, myself, and no one else, is responsible for?" By the way, if you were there that day in Babylon, if you were on the roof and you were looking out over the city with Nebuchadnezzar and you heard him say this, you would've nodded in agreement, because Babylon was amazing. It was a great city, because he was a great builder. Nebuchadnezzar was actually a master builder. If you were there that day, if you were looking out at Babylon, hearing him speak, here's what you would've seen.

You would've seen a rectangular city, surrounded by two sets of double walls. One of them was 17 miles long. One of the inner walls was so wide, you could put two chariots side by side and drive on top of it. Massive fortifications. You would've seen a 262-foot-wide moat encircling the entire city. You would've seen a 400-foot-long bridge spanning east and west, or rather, spanning the Euphrates River, and connecting east and west Babylon. You would've seen the recently renovated temple of Marduk adorned in gold. You would've seen the fabled Hanging Gardens of

Babylon. It was one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. It was a 400-foot mountain. He built a 400-foot mountain terrace with water features, lush vegetation, and he did it, get this, maybe this was the best thing he ever did, for his wife.

So, Nebuchadnezzar, his wife, Amytis, she's from Media, right? She's from Media. Media's got hills: Babylon is flat. So she's in Babylon and she's wistful, she's longing for the hills of home and she says, "Oh, if only there were hills." So Nebuchadnezzar says, "I got you, babe." So, he built a 400-foot mountain to remind her of home so she can sit up on top, and it had this almost air conditioner effect because of the water features, and so she could just sit up there in the cool and look at the city. It was an amazing city.

So, when Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon?" Yeah, it was a great city. But see, Nebuchadnezzar's flaw was he took all the credit and Nebuchadnezzar said, "I did this" and if you were there that day in Babylon, if you were on the roof with Nebuchadnezzar, looking at the city as he praised himself, you would've also heard a voice from heaven interrupt this pompous party of praise, and you would've heard an angel declare judgment.

See, God had had enough. God was done with Nebuchadnezzar's pride. "How many months do you need to repent? I gave you 12!" So, in verse 33, judgment falls like a hammer, and God is going to rip the kingdom out of Nebuchadnezzar's hands like a toy from a toddler. Then Nebuchadnezzar is going to be driven out, he'll lose his power. He'll be "driven out from among men". He's going to "eat grass like an ox, live like a wild beast". You're going to see the mightiest man become a total mad man, and his name is Nebuchadnezzar, and he's going to live like an animal. Maybe you say, "Come on, pastor. I'm an intellectual. I live in an age of science. I don't believe this kind of fanciful material. I don't think he became like an animal. That's legend."

Here's the interesting thing. So, there's a medical condition, documenting a medical condition, where a person legitimately thinks he's an ox and he eats grass like an ox. You say, "That's crazy." I agree, that's crazy. But it's also real. They call it boanthropy. Boanthropy. So, the writer R. K. Harrison, he went to a British mental institution, this is back in 1946, and he observed a young British guy, looked normal on the outside, didn't look crazy, but he observed this guy with some really unusual symptoms. Here's what he records as he observed this young man in the British mental institution, I quote.

"His daily routine consisted of wandering around the magnificent lawns, and it was his custom to pluck up and eat handfuls of grass as he went along. He never ate institutional food with the other inmates, and his only drink was water." The writer was able to examine him, and the only physical abnormality noted, and I want you to hear this, "consisted of a lengthening of the hair" sound familiar and a "coarse thickening of the fingernails". That's the description of Nebuchadnezzar. This is 1946. So, you can trust your Bible. It's not a fantastical tale. This is real history and God delivers it to you in Daniel 4. He wants you to see judgment that fell on proud Nebuchadnezzar and by the way, this is poetic justice. Nebuchadnezzar's descent into animal madness, there's poetic justice here. Let me show you that.

Remember when he was on the roof, right? He's looking at the city, you remember what he said? He boasted of his power. So, what does God do? God strips Nebuchadnezzar of power, such that the only power he now possesses is the power to pick which clump of grass to munch on next. Then Nebuchadnezzar boasted of his majesty, right? So, God strips him of all majesty and honor, and God makes him lower than the lowest slave by becoming a brute beast. Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the splendor of the city. He said, "I did that." So God says, "You're right and here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you an animal mind that prefers mud and grass to magnificent architecture." Nebuchadnezzar couldn't even enjoy the city he built.

Nebuchadnezzar lived in that zone for seven years. But amazingly, there's more to the story, verse 34. Dramatic turn of events. "I, Nebuchadnezzar", again, this is a personal testimony. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'"

That's from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar. That's worship, folks. That's worship and then verse 36 completes the story. His reason returns, his sanity is restored, and his authority is reestablished and then God adds more honor and glory to Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Nebuchadnezzar responds in verse 37 with more worship. Folks, there's a lot of disagreement about what happened with Nebuchadnezzar. I would say this is real conversion. 34 to 37 looks like genuine conversion from pagan to worshiper of God. I think you're going to meet him in heaven.

That's part one, the story explained. Time for part two, The Story Ingrained. Now that you know the story, I want you to understand the story. So, what I'm going to do is extract the principle verse, the principle core idea from Daniel 4, and I'm going to seek to deposit it into your heart so that you always have this magnificent truth with you and this magnificent truth is in Daniel 17, and it's actually repeated again in verse 25, and again in verse 32. So three times in Daniel 4, God says the exact same thing and folks, you got to know this. God doesn't repeat Himself needlessly. There's no willy-nilly repetition in the Bible. God says something once, and then He repeats it because it matters, and then He repeats it a third time because it's extraordinarily significant. You have a triple repetition in this chapter, and that's what I want to look at for the moment. Here's what verse 17 says, "That the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men."

I'm going to simplify that even more for you. My words: God is greater than you think. God is greater than you think. That's the essence of this chapter. See, Daniel is going to show you that, and he's shown you that through the lens of sovereignty, that your God is far greater than you think, and your God is far greater than the pagans think. See, our God is greater than we think and it's so important in Babylon to remember this, because Babylon says there is no God. You

worship a myth. He doesn't do anything for you. He doesn't do anything at all and yet Daniel 4 says no, our God reigns, and our God rules, and our God is far greater than you think. I want to show you that. I want to give you nine reasons, based on God's sovereignty, why God is greater than you think. Because this is the key to living well in Babylon. Remembering this truth: our God is greater than you think. Nine ways. I hope you're ready to write.

Number one, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an exalted sovereignty. It's an exalted sovereignty, and maybe just write down "exalted sovereignty". That's verse 17, right? "The Most High rules the kingdom of men". Who rules the kingdom of men? "The Most High rules the kingdom of men". That title, the Most High, you've read it five times in Daniel 4. What it signifies and conveys is the absolute, unending, borderless, boundless, limitless sovereignty of God. You can rightly say there's none higher or greater, there's none bigger or better, there's none faster or stronger than the God of the Bible.

No matter how great man thinks man is, God's greater than man. No matter how great man thinks God is, God's greater than that. Psalm 135:5, "For I know that the Lord is great". Aren't you glad that the Lord is great? "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods." He is above all gods, and you could add a postscript, and all men.

Number two, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an exclusive sovereignty. An exclusive sovereignty. Again, verse 17, "the Most High rules the kingdom of men". Now remember, this was conveyed to Daniel in a dream. Here's what God did not say. Let's think for a moment about what isn't there. God didn't say, "You, Nebuchadnezzar, rule over the kingdom of men." Yeah, but wait, wasn't he? Only in a temporary sort. He didn't say, "You, Nebuchadnezzar, rule the kingdom of men." If you want to put it in modern language, God doesn't say, "The President rules the kingdom of men. Congress rules the kingdom of men. Your boss rules the kingdom of men. You rule the kingdom of men!" No, no, no. He doesn't say that. He says, "the Most High". That's great, because it means God doesn't share His power. God doesn't have a second seat next to Him on His throne where you can sit.

You say, "Yeah, but doesn't God delegate power? Didn't He give Nebuchadnezzar the power to be the ruler?" Yeah, for sure. This is Romans 13:1, all authority which exists comes from God. But don't forget, every single ruler on planet Earth, no matter how low or how great, every one of them is nothing but a chess piece in the hand of God, the grandmaster and God takes this piece and moves it here, and He takes this ruler and He moves them here, and He does it at His own perfect will.

Number three, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an exhaustive sovereignty. It's an exhaustive sovereignty. This is from verse 17 and verse 37. Verse 17 says, "the Most High rules the kingdom of men". Okay, that sounds like earthly rule. Verse 37, God is called "the King of heaven". "King of heaven" implies He rules heaven. So, He's the ruler of earth, He's the ruler of heaven. What else is there? That's everything, folks and so there is nothing over which God does not rule. There's not a renegade proton, photon, planet, or person anywhere in the cosmos. Your God sovereignly rules every inch of the cosmos. Aren't you glad

it's not Nebuchadnezzar who rules everything? It's your God who rules everything. Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and" get this, "His kingdom rules over all." All.

Number four, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an active sovereignty. It is an active sovereignty. Back to verse 17, "God rules the kingdom of men". He rules the kingdom of men. Some people would imagine, because they don't see God moving, they say, "Ah, maybe God's asleep at the wheel. Maybe there really is nobody driving this ship. Maybe we're just headed nowhere. Maybe God wound up the universe like a clock, and He's just sitting back to watch this thing tick, but He's not involved or engaged in what happens here." Then Daniel 4 would say no, He is actively involved in His sovereignty. Just because we don't see it, doesn't mean it's not true. If you were to ask Nebuchadnezzar, "Hey, does God actively rule the world?" What do you think he would say? "Absolutely, God rules the world. I thought I did. I was wrong."

Number five, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is a particular sovereignty. It is a particular sovereignty. Again, verse 17. He "gives it to whom He will". He "gives it to whom He will", and "it" speaks of authority and power. He "gives it to whom He will". You might say, "Listen, I don't quite understand the way the world operates. Why does this politician get elected, I didn't vote for him, and this one doesn't? Why is this person rising to power, and this one is forgotten?" Make it more personal. "Why do I not get promoted at work, but my coworker, who's not as talented, not as intelligent, doesn't even work as hard as me, he gets promoted? She gets the promotion and the raise. Why? I don't understand. Okay, God's sovereign, but why does He do what He does?"

Daniel says He "gives it to whom He will". He does it because it's His sovereign pleasure and Psalm 75:7 sort of backs it up. It says, "but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another." Why? I don't know. Because God's ways are mysterious, would you agree? His ways are mysterious, but would you not also agree, His work is perfect? Deuteronomy 32:4, "The rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are just." So, no matter what happens in national politics, no matter what happens in office politics, you can rest in the fact that God rules, and He gives authority to whomever He wills, and whomever He wills must be the best case. Not according to our estimation, but according to divine wisdom.

Number six, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an enduring sovereignty. It's an enduring sovereignty. Now jump to verse 34, "His kingdom endures from generation to generation". Generation to generation, what is that but eternal, everlasting sovereignty? His kingdom never ends. His rule never stops and we live in an age where elected officials come and go. They're here for two years, four years, but then they're gone. Isn't it good to know God doesn't have a term limit? God never comes up for reelection. He just rules. He always rules. Yesterday, God was on the throne. This morning, God is on the throne. Tomorrow, He'll be on the throne and the day after, and every tomorrow thereafter, God is on the throne. So, it doesn't actually matter, in some sense, who sits in the White House, the state house, the courthouse, or

your house, because God ultimately rules. His rule is forever and if anybody's going to rule forever, you want it to be the Most High.

Number seven, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is a proximate sovereignty. It is a proximate sovereignty. By proximate, I just mean near and present. It's here. I get that from verse 35, God does whatever He wants "among the inhabitants of the earth". Hold on, that sounds like where we live. The Earth, that's us, that's our planet, that's where we live, and move, and have our being. Are you telling me that God, His sovereignty, is actively moving in my life? My office space? My family? This country? Yeah, that's exactly what he's saying. God's not distant and disinterested. God is actively at work "among the inhabitants of the earth", and you're one of those inhabitants. So, no matter how bad things look in your job situation, or in your family situation, or in your marriage, or in the doctor's office, you can be very confident that God is present and He's involved. He's not absent. He's there. He's working.

Number eight, God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is an invincible sovereignty. It is an invincible sovereignty. Because listen, up to this point, sovereignty is great, but what if somebody can overturn what God does? He's on His throne forever. But what if somebody can simply undo what God does? What if somebody's got more power than God? Then it really is not that encouraging. But verse 35 reinforces your faith. Verse 35 says, "none can stay His hand". By the way, the expression "stay His hand", that refers to when a parent would sort of swat the hand of the child in punishment and chastisement. "Don't do that." "None can stay God's hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'"

Practically speaking, what that tells you is nobody can beat God, defeat God, question God, or condemn God. He stands above all mankind. He does not answer to us. He does whatever He wants, whenever He wants, wherever He wants. Psalm 135:6, "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps." He does whatever He pleases, and aren't you so glad that what God pleases is perfect? Aren't you glad that the all sovereign, all powerful, all righteous, all holy God has limitless power and capacity to accomplish the totality of His perfect will? Listen, if Nebuchadnezzar was the one who was in power, perfectly so, you and I would have tremendous reason to be concerned. Nebuchadnezzar is not perfectly in power. God has invincible sovereignty, invincible sovereignty and when you're tempted to fret, and you're tempted to be alarmed, remember and rest in His rule; it's invincible.

Number nine, last one. God is greater than you think because His sovereignty is a gracious sovereignty. This one's kind of like the cherry on top. It's the sweetest. It's a gracious sovereignty. Straight out of verse 36, look at verse 36. "At the same time," remember, this is after seven years. "At the same time my reason return to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me." What? He got it all back. He got it all back. "My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me." Did you get that? "Still more greatness". Greatness upon greatness upon greatness was added to Nebuchadnezzar. That's amazing, because Nebuchadnezzar didn't

do anything worthy. All he did is what was required: he repented, and he humbled himself before the mighty God. And God says, "I'll honor that."

Kind of makes you think of Job, right? The end of Job, Job 42, God doubles what Job used to have. Then James 5:11 comments on what happened to Job. James 5:11 says, "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord," and here's what I want you to grab onto. "How the Lord is compassionate and merciful." Aren't you glad that He's compassionate and merciful? That your God has a gracious sovereignty? A gracious sovereignty? I wonder, have you submitted to the gracious sovereignty of God? Because Nebuchadnezzar was proud for most of his life, and he resisted and he was stiff-necked. If there's anyone in this room and you are not a Christian, and you are resisting God's sovereign rule, and you're saying, "I don't want to submit to Him, I don't like what your Bible says, I don't want you to limit my freedom to enjoy life as I see fit. Who are you to tell me not to sleep with my girlfriend, not to do drugs, not to embezzle from my company? If they don't catch me, it's fine."

What Daniel 4 would say to you is please, don't be a fool. Judgment is coming. You're not going to get it in a dream because you already got it in a book and this book says judgment is coming for the proud, for every sinner who resists God's sovereign will. So the voice of Daniel cries out to you through this text, and he says, "Please, repent before it's too late. Please humble yourself before the mighty God of heaven, in case judgment may be averted," and I will say, if you repent and believe, judgment will be averted. God has never turned away the sinner who cried out and said, "Have mercy on me. I want Jesus." Let that be you today, if that has never been you yet.

I am going to end with the story of the funeral of Louis XIV. See, before Louis XIV died, he said, "I want to tell you how I want my funeral to go. It needs to be in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and I want my casket up front, and I want all the lights extinguished except one single candle on my casket, because I want all the light to emanate from me." So, they did what the king requested. He's dead now, but it's his funeral, they did what he requested. So, the court preacher Massillon, he gets up, he's going to give the funeral oration at Louis XIV's funeral, and he walks over to the casket... and he blows out the candle. And then he says this. He says, "Only God is great. Only God is great, " and in Babylon, where we live, we need to remember only God is great.

Every official who exalts himself will one day answer to God. But you can be comforted to know that our God is greater than you think and He rules, and He rules supremely. If you want to walk well and wisely in Babylon, remember our God rules, and our God is great. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this reminder from Daniel 4. It's easy, in Babylon, to forget that you're in control. Thank you for reminding us that you are. Help us to rest in your rule. Help us to simply trust, cast our cares upon you, and walk daily in obedience. We want to do this because it pleases you, and we want to give you honor, even as Nebuchadnezzar gave you honor. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, our Savior, Amen.